

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare

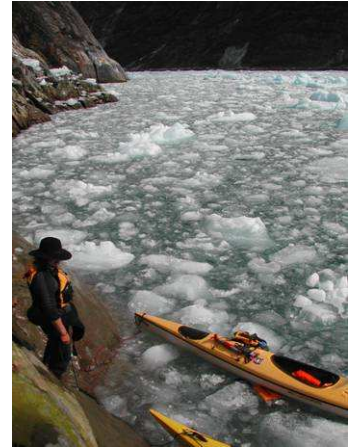


Extreme conditions exist in the Alaskan coastal rainforests, mountains and surrounding waters year round.

- Cold water and inclement weather make hypothermia a constant risk.
- Weather conditions may change rapidly including precipitation, temperature, winds and visibility.
- Sea conditions may change rapidly including wave height, tidal exchanges, currents and ice floes.
- Terrestrial challenges include severe terrain, dense vegetation, glacial crevasses, loose/uneven/slippery footing and swift cold rivers.
- Coastal challenges include tidewater glaciers, icebergs, strong currents, reefs, rocks, mudflats and limited sheltered anchorages/landings.
- Winter challenges include avalanches, thin ice over water, white-outs, deep snow, temperatures well below freezing, high winds, big seas and minimal daylight.

Coastal Alaska is vast, wild and remote. Proper planning is essential for your comfort and safety.

- Your party and your gear must be capable of handling cold, soaking conditions.
- Your party must be self-sufficient in case of being weathered-in or in case of an emergency.
- Communications coverage for satellite phones, cell phones and marine radios can be non-existent or spotty.
- Proper planning includes the flexibility to adjust plans for the conditions and recognizing “no-go” situations.
- Experienced rangers usually adjust their plans several times over a one-week field trip!



Before setting out, all visitors should talk with local USFS staff to learn of regulations/ special concerns that address protecting the resource, wildlife, visitors and the visitor experience.

- Outfitters/Guides and their staff must know the parameters of their permits including: where they are permitted to operate; when/for how many user-days, and any requirements from added stipulations.

Many Alaskan campsites can only sustain small groups due to topography and vegetation constraints. Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use. Visit in small groups. Split larger parties into smaller groups.

- Prior to the season outfitters/guides should coordinate with other outfitters/guides to minimize overlapping use and to determine how overlapping groups will conduct themselves and/or resolve their issues.
- Visitors are encouraged to avoid popular areas during peak use, especially areas with limited camping, such as glacial fjords or small islands.
- Large groups disturb wildlife, compact soil, trample vegetation, create trails and impact other visitors' experiences.
- Small groups are lighter on the land, plants, animals and other visitors.



Repackage food to minimize trash. Bring extra food.

- Eliminate trash before your trip: pack food in reusable containers or plastic bags and get rid of packaging and wrappers.
- Prepare snack bags so you can eat throughout the day to sustain a constant energy level and to help stave off hypothermia.
- Plan for extra meals in case you are weathered-in, your trip takes longer than expected or you encounter an emergency.

Eliminate the use of marking paint, rock cairns and flagging which diminish the wild character of Alaska. Use a map and compass or a GPS unit to navigate accurately without disturbing the land or degrading future visitors' experiences.

- Make sure everyone in your party has the skills to navigate with a map and compass and GPS.
- Note Alaska has significant magnetic declination.
- Inclement weather, dense vegetation and winter darkness make it necessary to learn how to navigate with poor visibility.



Leave a wilderness trip plan with two responsible people. Know what to do if you or your party is lost or weathered-in.

- Your trip plan should include who is in your party, where you are going, when, with what gear, when you expect to return and when the Alaska State Troopers should be called if you are overdue.
- Two good examples of wilderness trip plans are:
 1. The [Alaska State Troopers Wilderness Trip Plan](http://www.dps.state.ak.us/pio/images/AST%20Trip%20Plan.pdf)

(Link: <http://www.dps.state.ak.us/pio/images/AST%20Trip%20Plan.pdf>)

2. The [Wrangell - St. Elias National Park & Preserve Backcountry Trip Plan](http://www.nps.gov/wrst/planyourvisit/upload/Backcountry%20Itinerary%20Form.pdf)

(Link: <http://www.nps.gov/wrst/planyourvisit/upload/Backcountry%20Itinerary%20Form.pdf>).

- Ensure everyone in your party knows what to do if your party gets lost, someone gets separated from the group or you are weathered-in.

